

HOUSE PASSES HERSETH SANDLIN'S WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT

Key Legislation Helping Women Vets Included in Bipartisan Veterans Bill

Washington, DC (April 21, 2010)-Today, the House of Representatives passed bipartisan landmark veterans legislation that improves services available to veterans and their caregivers. The bill includes Rep. Herseth Sandlin's Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act, which will help the Veterans Administration (VA) serve the 1.8 million women veterans by prioritizing their unique health care needs. The bill contains key provisions to help serve those who were sexually assaulted, who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or who need child care services.

"Studies show that the care provided to women veterans often falls short on many fronts," Rep. Herseth Sandlin said. "This bill will help the VA better respond to the unique needs and circumstances of our women veterans, and to keep pace with a changing veteran population. This includes recognizing the growing roles women play in our conflicts abroad, and preparing to meet their needs when they return home. I'm hopeful the Senate will act in short order to approve the bill, and send it to the President's desk for signature."

National Commander Roberto "Bobby" Barrera of the Disabled American Veterans said, "This measure contains landmark provisions introduced by Ms. Herseth Sandlin that will help ensure that women veterans, who have played an increasingly essential role in our military, receive quality, timely and gender-appropriate health care services from the Department of Veterans Affairs equal in every respect to that afforded male veterans. DAV deeply appreciates Ms. Herseth Sandlin's leadership in getting this legislation passed."

Specifically, the women veterans' provisions included in the legislation passed today require that the VA:

- Conduct a study on the barriers women veterans experience when seeking health care;
- Educate and train mental health professionals caring for veterans with sexual trauma;
- Implement a reintegration and readjustment pilot program for women veterans recently returned from a prolonged deployment;
- Establish a child care pilot program for veterans receiving regular and intensive health care

services, or who are in need of such services but do not seek care due to the lack of child care services;

- Provide up to seven days of post-delivery health care to the newborn children of eligible women veterans.

Click [here](#) to read Rep. Herseth Sandlin's press release following original House passage of the Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act, which includes more detail about these provisions.

In addition to the women veterans' provisions, the overall bill, S. 1963, would also provide support services to family and other caregivers of veterans, including education on how to be a better caregiver, counseling and mental health services, and respite care for family and other caregivers of all veterans. It also provides health care and a stipend for caregivers living with severely wounded veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Veterans return home with life-altering injuries that require significant changes in every aspect of day-to-day life for them and the ones who care for them," Rep. Herseth Sandlin said. "This bill recognizes these sacrifices and seeks to provide assistance that can ease the transition into a new life."

The bill also includes important provisions for rural veterans. Traveling to the nearest clinic in a rural area poses problems for many veterans in South Dakota. S. 1963 expands transportation for veterans to local VA hospitals and clinics through VA grants to local Veterans Service Organizations. In addition, S. 1963 expands eligibility regarding which organizations can receive grants for transitional housing and other support for homeless veterans, which will be particularly helpful to veterans in rural areas.

Finally, the bill requires the VA to conduct a veterans' suicide study. Rep. Herseth Sandlin said, "Given the alarming number of veteran suicides, it's critical that we understand the factors contributing to this problem, and identify steps we can take to prevent future tragedy."

The House and Senate have been negotiating the details of this legislation for the past several months. Now that the House has passed it, the Senate must also pass the bill before sending it to the President for his signature.

Herseth Sandlin chairs the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

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